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General Assembly

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A/AC.105/C.1/WG.5/L.29
4 March 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL
USES OF OUTER SPACE
Scientific and Technical Subcommittee
Working Group on the Use of Nuclear
Power Sources in Outer Space

USE OF NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN OUTER SPACE

Draft preamble to the principles relevant to the use of nuclear-power sources in outer space

Working paper submitted by Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Turkey and United Kingdom

Recognizing that for some missions in outer space nuclear-power sources (NPS) are particularly suited due to their compactness and long life;

Recognizing that the use of NPS in outer space should focus on those missions which take advantage of the particular properties of NPS;

Recognizing that the use of NPS in outer space should be based on a thorough safety assessment, with particular emphasis on reducing the risk of accidental exposure of the public to harmful radiation or radioactive material;

Recognizing the need, in this respect, for specific procedures and criteria, in the form of a set of principles, to ensure safe use of NPS in outer space;

Affirming that this set of principles applies to NPS in outer space devoted to generation of electric power on board space objects;

Recognizing that this set of principles may undergo future revisions in view of emerging nuclear-power applications and of evolving international recommendations on radiological protection.

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OUTER SPACE
Scientific and Technical Subcommittee
Working Group on the Use of Nuclear
Power Sources in Outer Space

DRAFT REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE USE OF NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN OUTER SPACE ON THE WORK OF ITS NINTH SESSION

1. The Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, reconvened in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/45 of 9 December 1991, paragraph 11, held its ninth session at United Nations Headquarters from 27 February to 4 March 1992 under the chairmanship of Mr. J. H. Carver (Australia), during the twenty-ninth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

2. Following an exchange of views, the Working Group adopted the present report at its meeting on ___ March 1992.

3. The Working Group noted that, on the basis of the work of its eighth session, in 1990, the Legal Subcommittee's Working Group on the question had agreed on a text for draft principle 3 relating to guidelines and criteria for safe use (A/AC.105/457, annex I, para. 12).

4. The Working Group noted that the scientific and technical guidelines and criteria for the safe use of nuclear-power sources in outer space could, in the future, be reviewed and revised as necessary, as provided in draft principle 12 of the draft principles contained in document A/AC.105/C.2/L.154/Rev.10.

5. The view was expressed that the language of draft principle 3 should be clarified, as indicated in order to prevent possible misinterpretation of certain of its provisions, identified in the working paper A/AC.105/C.2/L.185, which was submitted to the Legal Subcommittee at its thirtieth session, in 1991. It was believed that the changes in the language of draft principle 3 proposed in the working paper would meet those concerns. Other delegations

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expressed the view that draft principle 3 had been agreed by consensus and should not be reopened. Some delegations expressed the view that concerns regarding the scope of applicability of the draft principles should be addressed in the overall preamble to the principles.

6. The Working Group heard a presentation on the United States space nuclear-power programme, including the use of radioisotope thermoelectric generators on lunar and planetary probes, research on space nuclear reactor systems for lunar and Martian bases, and studies of nuclear propulsion systems for use outside the atmosphere.

7. The Working Group discussed a working paper submitted by Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Turkey and the United Kingdom (A/AC.105/C.1/WG.5/L.29) containing a draft text for a preamble to the set of principles, which is annexed to the present report. The Working Group agreed that the working paper provided a useful basis for discussions and might be considered further at the next session of the Legal Subcommittee.